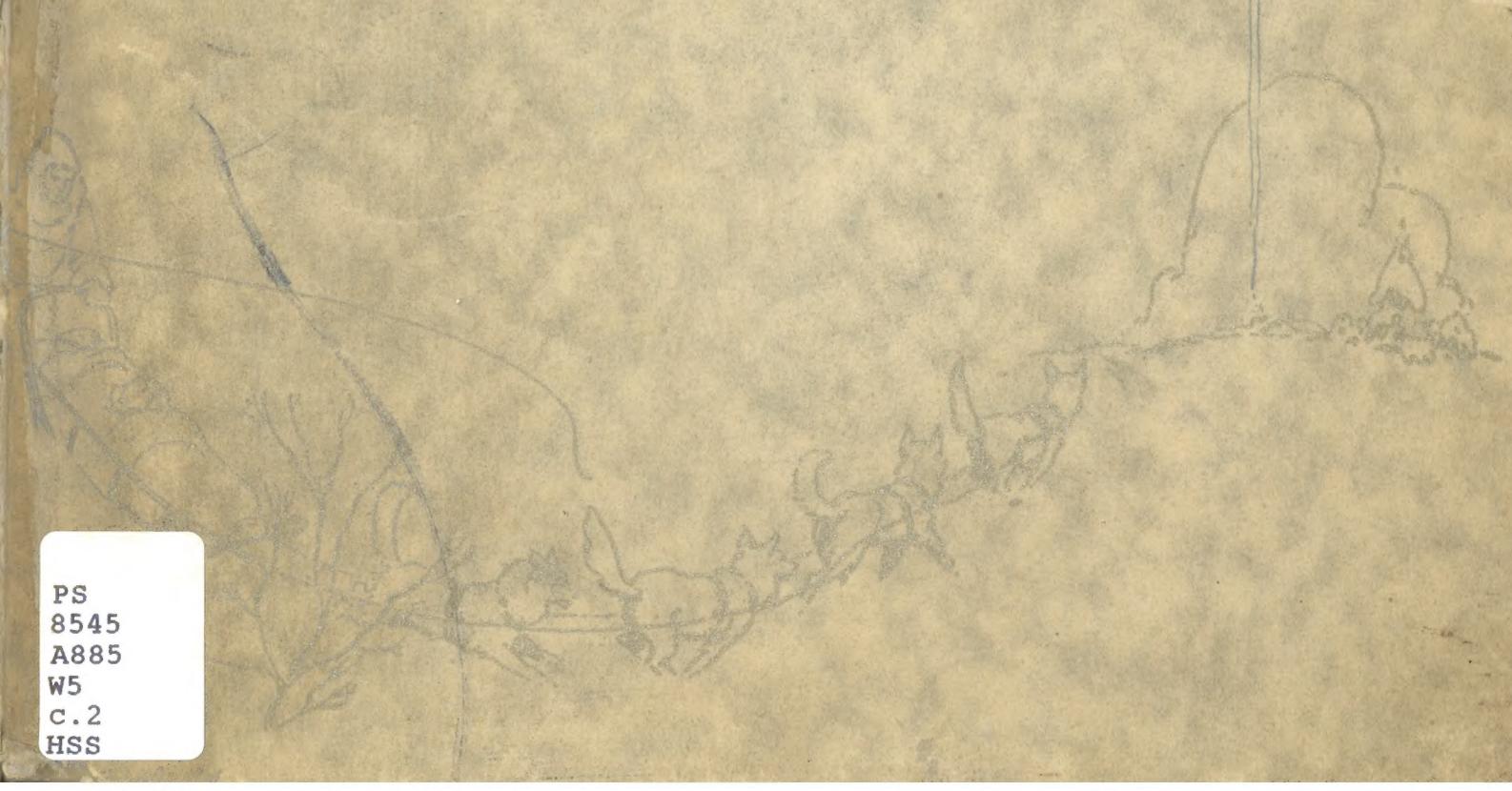


*With* **Christmas**  
*came to FORT GARRY*



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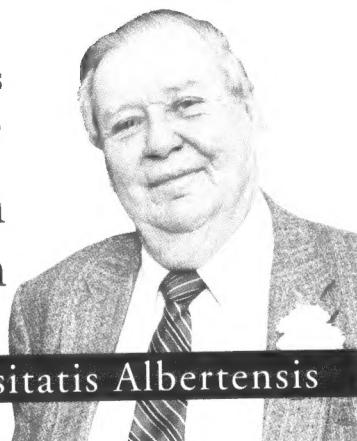
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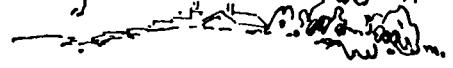


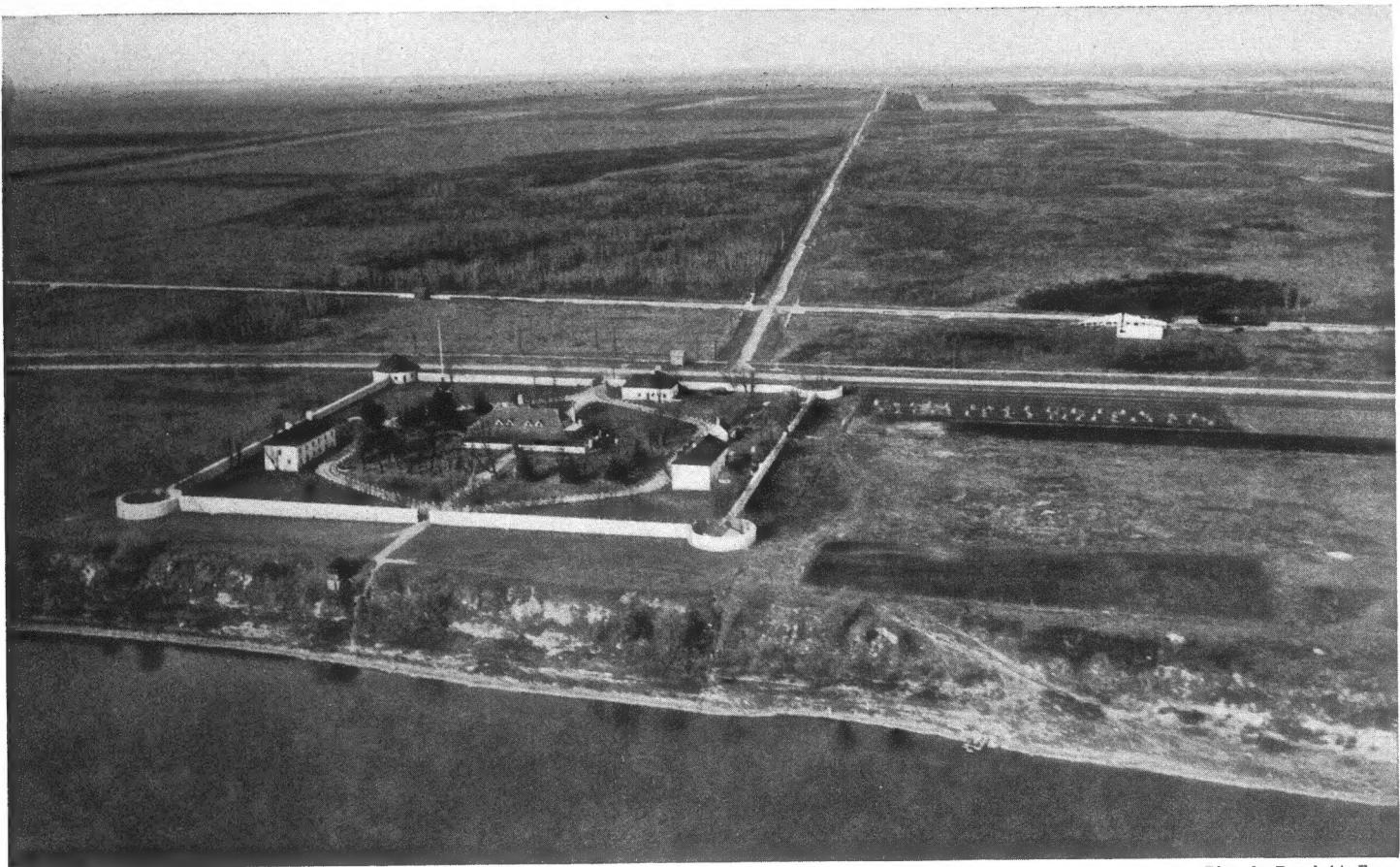






When Christmas  
Came to Fort Garry





*Photo by Royal Air Force*

*Lower Fort Garry from the Air*

# WHEN CHRISTMAS CAME TO *Fort Garry*

A ROMANCE OF THE EARLY RED RIVER DAYS

By ROBERT WATSON

*Author of*

"*My Brave and Gallant Gentleman*"

"*Gordon of the Lost Lagoon*"

"*High Hazard,*" Etc.



THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

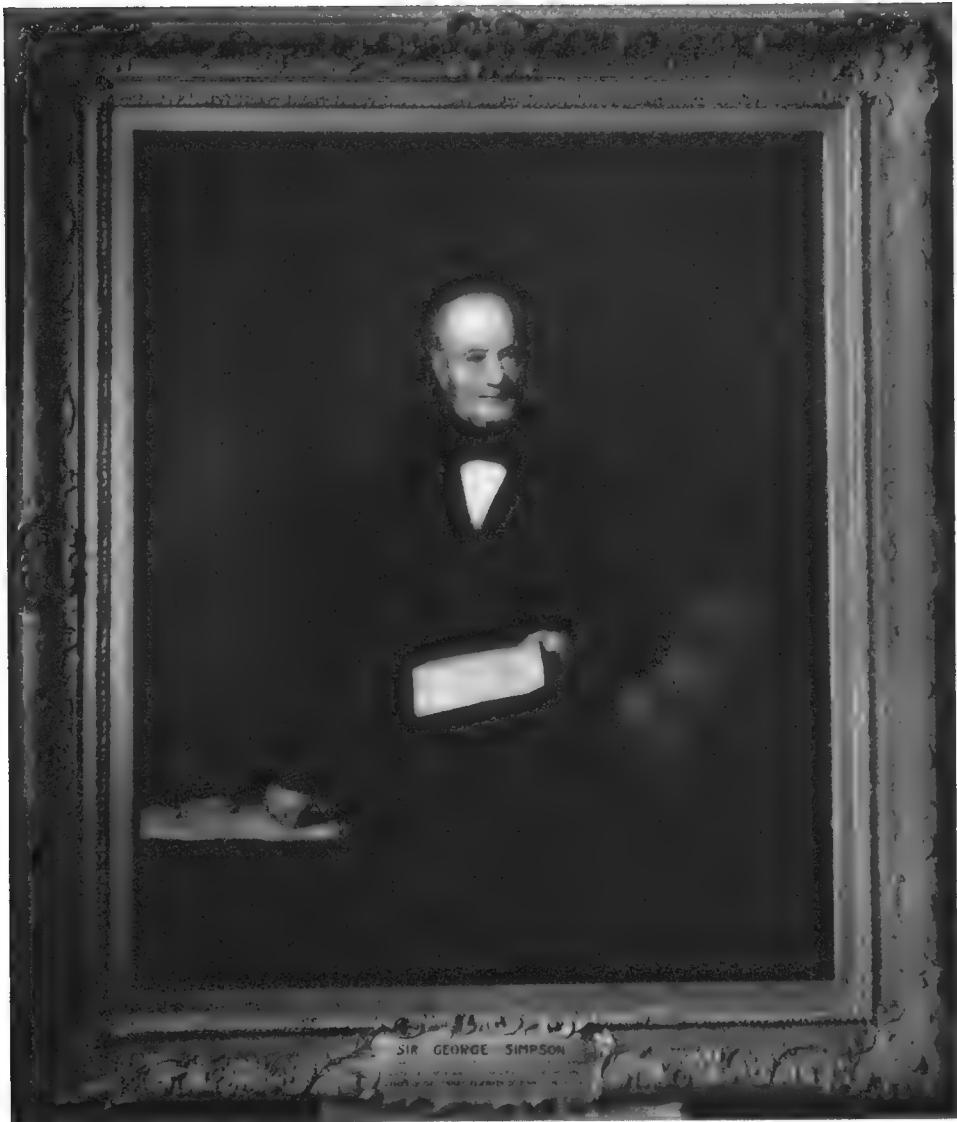
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*From Original at Hudson's Bay House, Winnipeg*

*Sir George Simpson*

## When Christmas Came to Fort Garry

### THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

OLD Larry Delorme, with his rumbling water wagon, was rambling along the trail between the loop-holed east wall of the Stone Fort and the Red River. It was a noisy contrivance he guided—a huge barrel built between the wooden wheels of what in its prime had been a squeaking, groaning Red River cart. Larry was water-carrier and general handy-man at Lower Fort Garry—never spectacular, never hurried, but always on the job. The water he was fetching for use in the Factor's residence was obtained from the perennial spring at the creek just south of the Fort, a spring which flowed consistently, summer and winter long, year in and year out, in defiance of droughts, floods and below-zero weather.

Larry's horse, old like himself, travelled its own gait, and but for the actual filling of the barrel with water, could have performed the task of transfer without the aid of its master, so accustomed had it become to the routine. A blizzard had been blowing from off Lake Winnipeg and up the Red River for several days, with snowdrift and biting cold. It had let up momentarily and there was a glint of bright afternoon sunshine that dazzled the sight and created a white, sparkling, scintillating brilliance in the snow-covered surroundings.

Old Larry scanned the frozen river. Suddenly he threw his rawhide reins aside, shouted a command to his horse which conveyed to it, if to none other, that it was to continue on its way to the rear of the residence, after him, at its own pace. He limped and hobbled ahead, through the outer and inner gateways and round to the rear of the big house.

Factor McAllister came out in response to Larry's rapping on the storm door.

"Hullo, Larry—what are you after this time?" asked the Factor.

"A dog team coming up the river, sir."

"Good! The long-expected winter packet, at last!"

"No, Mister McAllister. I doan' tink so. Stranger, I tink."

Andrew McAllister went back into the hallway, put on his outdoor garments—leather coat, fur cap and mitts—and strode across the well-kept fort to the eastern entrance, out to the plateau that stood high above and overlooked a wide expanse of the winding course of the Red River, now solid ice.

Big, strong and bearded, a man in mature prime, he scanned the white expanse. A dog team was rapidly approaching, with a runner in front and a driver behind. There was some one also riding in the cariole. As they drew

nearer, McAllister seemed still uncertain. But when a hundred yards only separated, he ran down the encrusted embankment, with a shout and very unfactorlike haste.

The occupant of the cariole, at the same moment, threw aside his robes, sprang out and hurried to meet his friend.

"David! David! My dear old friend. You, of all men!"

Factor Andrew McAllister grasped his visitor's hand heartily and laid his left arm affectionately across his shoulder.

"Ay, Andrew, and you're a grand sight for a far-travelled man," exclaimed the other. He also was big, strong and bearded.

"Ten years, man, since I've clapped an eye on the Stone Fort, and all we ever see of each other between-times is the few days in council once a year."

"Yes—ten years almost to a day."

The two clambered the embankment and entered the stone-walled fort, whose erection was commenced in 1831 by the Hudson's Bay Company, to assert their occupation under the Charter of 1670. The men asked questions and gave answers fast and furiously.

"What's brought you in from Fort Simpson this time of the year, David?"

"Hame, hame, hame!" answered the other, emotion trembling in his voice.

"Nothing serious, David, I hope? Not leaving the Company?"

"Me, Andrew? Me leave it—the Company. Man, I'm surprised you should even harbour the thought. I'll leave it when I leave this old world for good. And can a man who has been exiled in the North all these years not long for a sniff of the caller air and a sight of the heather hills and 'the lone sheiling,' and have his longing satisfied once in his lifetime?

"You've been back yourself, Andrew, you know. I have never been. And my old mother is still alive in our beloved Harray in the Orkneys."

"Man, I'm not begrudging you. Right glad I am, David, that you are able to make it at long last."

"Well, you know that at the last Council meeting, Governor Simpson said, when I broached the question, 'Maybe, David, maybe. But don't be building on it too much. Who is to hold the Fort in your absence? The Company's business must not suffer because of a holiday jaunt, even after thirty years' service. But we'll see, David—we'll see.'

"And I knew then, Andrew, that it would be so, for when Sir George says he'll see—he always sees. He never forgets—and here I am."

"And who is looking after the Fort?"

"I've left Peter Tod in charge at Simpson. He is a clever, upstanding man and should do fine. It will be a chance for him to see just what he is made of."

"How long will you be on furlough?"



*South Wall and Bastion*

"Eight months the Governor says in his letter; 'not a day more.' And eight months it is going to be."

The two men entered the residence, stamping and shaking the dry, crisp snow from their moccasins and socks.

"Nora, Nora! Run out, lass, and see who's here and in good time for his Christmas dinner."

The lady of the house came hurrying from the kitchen, where she had been personally supervising the Christmas dinner preparations. She stopped suddenly in surprise. Her kindly face beamed with pleasure.

"Ah, ah! Davey Armstrong—Davey, Davey, lad, and it's your ain sel. Who could be more welcome at this season of the year to the hearth and home of the McAllisters at the Stone Fort than David Armstrong? I have a thousand questions on my tongue, but I mustn't ask one until you have been made comfortable. You must be cold and tired from your long journey.

"Janette! Janette!" she called to the half-breed serving lass. "Hurry, lass—hot water. Get the bath-tub ready. Factor Armstrong from Fort Simpson is here. He will want a wash-up.

"Just come upstairs, David. There is always the best bedroom ready for such old friends as you. Eh, man—but I'm right glad to see your face again."

## WHEN OLD FRIENDS MEET

AN hour later the guest and his friends were seated round the great log fire that blazed and sparked up the stone chimney of the big, cosy parlour in the residence, with its great polar bear rugs on the floor and its antimacassared couches and chairs, amid comforts that bade defiance to the blizzard that was again raging outside.

"I'll warrant you found it tough going, coming over the lake that three hundred miles from Norway House, David. This blizzly weather has continued with hardly a let-up for three days."

"Ay, Andrew—it was a nasty trip. Lake Winnipeg in a storm is about as hard a bit of road to travel as you will find anywhere—be it winter or summer storm. But hard going or no, we never stopped except for a bite and a hot drink, and an hour or two's sleep to rest the dogs. The smell of the Christmas goose and the plum pudding, Nora, was too strong to permit of any delays," laughed the Factor.

David Armstrong and Andrew McAllister had come out from the Orkneys thirty years before, as apprentices in the service of the Company, and had served faithfully and diligently, rising almost together, step by step—Apprentice, Clerk, Postmaster, Junior Trader, Chief Trader, and recently, Factor, winning jurisdiction over domains greater in extent than the land that had cradled them.

In the days when they were Junior Traders, their waiting sweethearts had come out from Scotland, brides together in the Red River Settlement. But much water had passed under the bridge during the long years between—sad events, unforgettable events, happy events, too, all in the making of real men and women and in the shaping of life.

"Nora," exclaimed Armstrong, "bless your bonny face, you are as young looking and as pretty as ever. A wee bit white in the hair getting, but eyes as bright and a smile as sweet as they were ten years ago."

"Just havers, David Armstrong! It is an Irishman you should be with your blarney. A man come to your years of discretion doesn't have to win his way to his Christmas dinner by such flattery to a woman come to mine. I'm just getting gracefully older with the changing years, David. But you keep young and vigorous yourself. Bigger, stouter, gruffer, maybe, and your brows wear a deeper furrow, but just the same old David. Eh, Andrew?"

"You would have the Doctor in on you on his way North?" remarked McAllister.

"Ay—John Rae stopped over at Simpson for a bit. A hardy dog yon to travel. This country has seldom if ever seen his marrow on snowshoes or behind a team of dogs."

"You're none so far behind him yourself, David."

"A very long way, Andrew. Doctor Rae could kill me off in a week at his pace."

"He made his plans at the Stone Fort here before he set out, so we had lots of opportunity to study the fine, sturdy mettle of the man. More an explorer than a fur-trader, though, David."

"Ay—and even more an explorer than a Doctor, I was going to add, and he's a fine, upstanding medico at that. His heart, you see, is in travelling and exploring, and a man can always do his best work where his heart is."

"If any man can find trace of the Franklin Expedition that man is Dr. John Rae," continued Factor Armstrong.

"How are all the folks at Norway House?"

"Fine! Fine! Barnston is a busy man there since poor Donald Ross passed away. Donald's was a great loss to the service, Andrew. No finer fur-trade officer in the country than that God-fearing, honest man."

"Yes—and you would probably hear that we officers carried the coffin from his home here, twenty miles to the cemetery, because we felt such an honour was ours rather than let a wagon take him. It was a brotherly tribute to a grand man, David."

"Ay—and Norway House isn't quite the same without him. There is a feeling that Donald Ross took some of the glory of it away with him."

And so, bit by bit, the news of the Red River Valley was exchanged for that of the Mackenzie River district, while the glass of hot, sugared rum at the elbow of each of the Factors bore evidences of slow but sure inroads. But it would have taken weeks for the two officers to cover all they would have liked to tell and hear, so scraps here and bits there had to suffice.

## A COLOURFUL CHARACTER

"**A**NY word of the winter packet, David?"

"Yes—it came in over Playgreen Lake just as we pulled out."

Andrew McAllister's face lit up. "Good—and it will be here in time for Christmas, after all."

"Yes—these are the plans. It should be in to-morrow morning, maybe to-night."

"And who is running the packet in here this time?" McAllister inquired.

"Oh, Daido Lavarge!"

McAllister's brows clouded. He cast a hurried glance at his wife, but the look that passed between them went unnoticed by Factor Armstrong, who continued his conversation.



*The Residence. Home for a time of Sir George Simpson*

"Lavarge!—what a lad that is! He is a boat crew in himself, a past-master in the handling of a York boat, or a dog train. A born overseer of a brigade of ox carts. White man or Indian, they tell me there isn't his equal in the West country. He is a handsome big fellow—built like a Hercules. If only he were a white man, he would go far in the service, for yon lad has brains, and education, too. Where he got the book learning, God knows, but he is always reading when he finds the chance. However, he is a breed and that means, well—'thus far and no farther.' I have heard that his birth shows in his taciturnity—he chums with nobody, holds himself aloof from his fellow voyageurs and shuns the whites with equal dourness. I watched him come in after a punishing run with the packet all the way from York. Every man and dog in the train was dead done, but he had a laugh on his face and a dance still left in his toes.

"I saw him only once before—two years ago when he came with an express message from Sir George to me at Fort Simpson. He was little more than a boy then, but he certainly could travel. And the time he had for two days in our library! I gave him the run of it, knowing what like he was from what I had heard. He could hardly drag himself away for the return trip, so I finished by

giving him a few books to take along with him and return later, which he did, with a well-written note of thanks.

"Doctor Rae told me he had asked Sir George to let him have him on his present expedition, but the Governor had need of him himself on his express canoe next summer. But it is little I can be telling you of this man, only he interested me a little. You know lots more than I do about him, Andrew. Besides, with our short time, we've other more important things to talk about."

"And you think this Lavarge will be bringing the packet here?" asked McAllister reflectively, keeping to the subject in spite of David Armstrong's suggestion to leave it.

"Ay—I heard him plead with Barnston that he wanted to come in to the Red River. In fact, he as much as said he would come in, anyway. He has a will of his own, that lad.

"I daresay he has some cronies he wants to see, the same as we have sometimes. Maybe a lass—so who could blame him? But I'm thinking, Andrew, you don't like this fellow Lavarge?"

"Och!—I don't mislike him. He's a good servant of the Company and has influence with the natives, although he seldom hob-nobs with them. Just the same, I'd as soon he were staying at Norway House till he goes back to York. He seems to me to be a trouble-breeder and strikes me as a good man to keep in his place."

#### THE DAYS OF AULD LANG SYNE

AS they talked on, Mrs. McAllister rose several times and went to the doorway to inquire anxiously if there was any sign of the returning of her daughter, Margery, from the Upper Fort, where she had gone on some special shopping early that morning, in company with the Fort's trusty old clerk, Neil Gowan.

It was a twenty-mile trip each way to the Upper Fort, from Lower Fort Garry, but the trail was open and good.

"Don't be worrying about Margery, Nora. She'll be home in good time. She's as safe as the Bank of England with Neil Gowan."

"Yes, yes! I know that, Andrew. But it is a blustery, cold, treacherous afternoon, and accidents can happen. Besides, I'm thinking of my supplies. A fine Christmas dinner we'll be having to-morrow if some of the parcels I asked her to get for me don't arrive."

"Margery!" repeated David Armstrong, reflectively. "What a boor I am, Margery!—and I had forgotten even to mention her, with our old wives' chattering. She was just ten years old when I saw her last, Nora. Ten years old!—

golden curls, big blue eyes with a dark circle round the pupils of them, happy as a bubbling spring and could sing like a lassie. Ay, but she must be grown to a bonny lass now, just budding into womanhood."

"She's twenty, David," said Mrs. McAllister, with pride in her voice, "and just what you say—still a bubbling spring and without an apparent care or trouble."

"Twenty!" reflected Armstrong. "And she was called Margery after my Margery. My poor Margery—it was little I had to give her to make life happy—cold, hunger sometimes, no company but Indians and half-breeds; no refinement; the woods, the trail, the river. Poor Margery! And now I am going out and the greatest dream of her life is actually taking place. Home—home—home! Scotland—the beloved Isles of Orkney;—and she dead with most of her dreams unfulfilled!"

"Ah, David!" exclaimed Mrs. McAllister, putting her arm on his shoulder tenderly in passing, "it has not been very smooth sailing for you these years. And we were so sad when we heard about poor Margery; so patient, so uncomplaining, always so cheerful and so ready to help others. You have God to thank, though, that she did not suffer at the end as some have been called upon to suffer, David. And she had your love always—so strong, so consistent. She really was happy, and the isolation did not seem to worry her so much after all. It never does when one is really happy as she was. Every letter we had from her breathed of love and happiness."

David Armstrong brushed a wet eyelash and gazed into the reaching flames.

"She was never just the same after that terrible trip from Minnesota," remarked Factor McAllister, "after—after the Indian raid on the American Express by which they were travelling—never the same after the harrowing loss of your wee Davey."

Armstrong, big and rugged man that he was, rose in an agony of soul.

"The fiends—the hell-hounds! God in heaven!—and I was not there to put out a hand to help." He threw up his arms, then sat down quietly, with his head in his hands, as if ashamed of his show of mental anguish.

"Yes, David, but it might have been even worse," put in Mrs. McAllister, "and but for Margery's devotion in running after those savages in the hope of finding her boy, missing them and being found on the trail the next day by Johnstone's ox-train, exhausted and heart-broken, she, too, might have been lost to you then." As the words sank deep, Armstrong raised his head.

"Wee Davey would just be in the prime and pride of his young manhood," he reflected. "It is hard, hard to lose the only one. Such a sturdy, promising lad as he was, and happy like his mother. The world is a hard place, and while we can't crowd out our sorrows and regrets, we have no right to saddle them on our friends, and at Christmas time especially. We must never forget our joys, our blessings." He smiled wanly.

## THE DAUGHTER OF THE HOUSE

THE sound of sleigh bells and raised voices heralded the welcome return of Margery McAllister and Neil Gowan, with the supplies from the Upper Fort. Bringing with her a suggestion of the salt-laden breezes of the rugged coast of Scotland, together with sunshine through summer mists, Margery McAllister pranced into the parlour, her cheeks aglow, her golden curls wantoning across her smooth brow, eyes bright and lips apart, alive with the glow of young womanhood and the invigoration of her journey.

She was pouring out a torrent of girlish explanations of their delay in getting back and of the preparations for Christmas that were under way at the Upper Fort, when she caught sight of the visitor. She stopped in embarrassment, then waited demurely.

"Margery, don't you know? This is your old friend, Factor Armstrong. David Armstrong, my dear. You remember him, long, long ago."

"Oh—why, yes, yes! Factor Armstrong—he was Trader Armstrong then, like dad, and always had peppermints in his pocket," she returned laughingly.

David Armstrong, laughing also, shook hands with her and, as he scanned the golden beauty of the young lady, so full of vivacity and life, bubbling over with happiness, his eyes became moist. He put his hands on her shapely shoulders and kissed her lightly on the cheek.

"How sweet and charming you have become, Margery. And how proud your mother and father are of you, I am sure."

She smiled. "Did you come in with the winter packet, Mr. Armstrong?" she inquired, if anything a little too anxiously.

"No, dear—he came ahead of it," put in her father. "We expect it here to-morrow morning—perhaps to-night."

"Then we are going to have our Christmas mail in spite of the blizzards. Oh, good, good!"

"Yes, Margery—Daido Lavarge just came in over the lake with the packet from York as we were preparing to pull out."

Her face lit up with a certain interest at the mention of Lavarge's name.

"So Daido Lavarge is bringing it in," she said quietly.

"Yes—they suggested he stay there to make the return trip, but he wished to come all the way in. And we can be sure he will be here in time for his Christmas dinner and the dance with the other servants in the men's house."

Margery went over to the piano and ran her fingers over the keys. It was an old-fashioned instrument, with the strummy tones of a harpsichord, but it was a great treasure in the Red River Valley—one of the very few of such instruments then in the country, for transportation in the eighteen-fifties was still a very serious and costly problem.

She played some simple airs: "Wha'll Buy my Herring," "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," "Edinburgh Toon"—then she sang softly in a sweet plaintive voice that old melody that sets the memory jumping and the heart athrob—"Auld Robin Gray":

"Young Jamie lo'ed me weel  
And sought me for his bride."

As she finished, there were tears in her mother's eyes, while her father drummed his fingers slowly on the arm of his chair and frowned at his boots. David Armstrong, too, was pensive and enthralled. Mrs. McAllister rose and went over to her daughter. She took her face in her hands and kissed her quivering lips, tenderly and lovingly, patting her shoulder. And the tears in Margery's eyes wet the cheek of her mother.

But a moment later she tossed her head high, laughed gaily and broke into the rollicking song that sets the feet tapping, "Charlie is My Darling," and with her change of mood came a change in all of them, injecting merriment and a cheerier conversation into the little group in the cosy parlour.

#### THE WINTER PACKET

AS the day was slowly giving way to the crowding gloom of night, Margery put on her fur garments, at the request of her mother, and ran across to the store by the south wall of the Fort for a few supplies still required to complete the Christmas dinner needs.

The store was crowded with merry, gabbing and busy shoppers—fat Indian women, tobacco-smelling Indians, swaggering half-breeds who eyed the pretty but simpering native girl shoppers bashfully, with a nervous laugh to themselves to hide their awkwardness. Neil Gowan and his assistant were swamped with work. Silk handkerchiefs, mufflers, coloured prints, belts and garters, fancy moccasins, hair ornaments, strings of beads, cheap candies and tobacco, were in great demand, while flour, tea and sugar, tin pans and kettles all were passing over the counter in greater quantities than usual, to be recorded against the purchasers in the books of the Company if their credit was good, or exchanged for fur, English coins and the Company's blanket notes—all good money in the Red River Valley.

The noise subsided as Margery entered, and deferentially the way was cleared for the young mistress who was held in so high regard and whose golden hair commanded that further respect and awe which it has always been known to do from the superstitious Indian. Gowan left the noisy, clamorous crowd to attend to her.



*The Penitentiary*

She was again making her way across the snow-covered lawn of the Fort, with her arms full of provisions, when she heard a shout from away down the river. The Indians and natives in the store heard it, too, and raced out and along the river bank to witness the coming in of the winter packet.

Margery deposited her supplies by the inner gateway of the residence, and hurried over to the east wall and out by the gateway there. The Indians and half-breeds were already gathered along the high bank, shouting and pointing.

"Eet ees the beeg Lavarge! You see now the great race. He ees the beeg fellow to travel;—ha-ha! You watch heem come in now."

With a shout, three dog teams rounded the bend of the river a mile away. A fierce yell and a volley of shouting encouragement from the watchers, and the race for the Fort was on. Margery's heart beat fast. The dogs were dashing madly over the river ice for the Fort, whips were cracking, bells jingling, with the drivers racing furiously, guiding their sleds with practised hand and eyes, and sure, swift feet.

"There he ees—Lavarge—Daido! See heem come! See heem race!"

There was only one team in it. The dogs were well enough matched—but the men—none could equal Lavarge.

Madly, furiously, hilariously they came on, and as they reached the trail which ran up the bank and led directly to the Fort, the team of Lavarge was winner by a clear two hundred yards. Cheers and shouts greeted each arrival.

#### DAIDO LAVARGE—VOYAGEUR

DAIDO LAVARGE, dashing spirit of dog-drivers incarnate, raced on into the Fort, waving his whip in the air and cracking it overhead, shouting in friendly manner to all, but heeding none in particular.

He drew up by the store door. He was tall and broad of shoulder, but not too broad. He had that lithe, lean, bone-and-sinew appearance of a real man of the forest and lakes. His face was bare of hair, clean cut and peculiarly handsome, with a fairness that was unusual in a half-breed. He had an aloofness, a dignity that was part of himself, but which also often belonged to the Indian who was born to be a chief among his fellows. His eyes were hazel brown and wide set in his face. The whites of them were as pure white as the snow about him.

A cap of rich, dark-brown beaver fur protected his head and ears. A *l'assumption* belt girded his middle over his mooseskin coat, from which hung tassels of coloured wool. Beaded garters, also with hanging coloured tassels, bound his trousers below the knee, and strong, serviceable moccasins encased his feet. He seemed the embodiment of health and strength—a picture of forest manhood in its prime.

He glanced about him with an air of haughtiness. Then he caught sight of Margery as she was returning through the outer gateway. The look on his face changed to a wonderful softness. He left his panting dogs—already squatted on the snow, with lolling tongues and expanding sides—and strode over to the young lady. He doffed his cap before her and pulled off his mitt.

"I am so glad to see you again, Margery," he said quietly. "It has been a very long time—eternity to me."

She shook hands demurely, but there was a tightness in her bosom. Looking into his fearless and all too admiring brown eyes, she replied:

"I am very happy to meet you again, too, Daido, and to see you looking so well and strong. I was afraid at first you were not coming to the Red River this trip. Then I feared for you in the blizzard, and almost wished you were not on the trail."

He laughed, showing his teeth. "The blizzard! I hold no fear for it—ever.

"Margery," he went on, "you are so very beautiful, like the summer sunrise, all gold and softness. I lie awake in the forest in the velvet black of the night, I dream when I sing to the paddle or the heavy oar, and always the subject of my dreaming is the same—Margery, Margery, Margery."

A frightened look came into her eyes. "Hush, Daido! Hush! Some one might hear you. Some of these people over there might see. And you know it is all such useless foolishness." Tenderness was in her eyes.

"I am sorry," he replied. "I should not. This is no place. You will forgive me, Margery. But it has been so long, and my heart, my soul, it is so perturbed. Shall I see you somewhere—somehow—to-night, dearest? I know I should not ask, but there is no other way. I have come on wings, on speeding feet, my heart singing in the hope to see you."

"Perhaps—yes, yes!" she answered hurriedly.

"Ah, Margery! It is all I have come for. I shall be near—all the time near—waiting. If you do not come—still I shall be waiting."

Then he turned away with a loud, outdoor, man's laugh on his lips. Dropping into the vernacular of the voyageur, so that all who cared could hear, he cried:

"Ya—we sure make the queeck trip, Mees McAllistaire—tank you very much. Norway House to here in four sleeps—an' the blizzard she blow all the time.

"Ho—beeg mail we bring, Mees—Daido Lavarge nevair late with the winter packette."

Margery walked toward the residence, picking up her packages by the inner gateway. She saw her father hurry down from the men's house to the store to meet the newly-arrived packet. In her bosom was a strange fluttering of emotions—a joy that sang and would not be stilled. There was a sinking feeling there, too, for well she knew how hopeless was this interest in Daido Lavarge—which on their secret meeting one night a year ago had awakened to something stronger.

Lavarge! Truly a man without a country; no family, no standing; just a Company servant and likely always to remain that; nothing but himself, his strong arm and stout heart; claiming nothing from the world as his right, excusing nothing; disdaining all humility, all cringing; fearless, reckless; termed a native, a half-breed, with a certain amount of sneering; yet with the manners, the gentleness, the book-culture, the tastes of a gentleman—honourable, trustworthy; unequalled on water or in the bush; clean, upright; the disgust of the voyageur because he never took his rum ration, never chewed tobacco; but still the fear of all of them because of his undisputed mastery with paddle, snowshoe and musket, with the fist and the strong arm.

Daido Lavarge! And to think that, in spite of all the other men, of all the officers in the Honourable Company, all the eligible young dandies in the settle-



*The Men's House, Lower Fort Garry*

ment, she, the daughter of Factor McAllister, should have allowed her heart to be stolen away by such a forest outcast. Yet it was so, and for Margery it could now be no other way. She was impotent against the flood of her own emotions, a flood that had come up and engulfed her almost before she was aware of it, and caused her, as it came, to sing in her heart in the very delight of the engulfing. Lavarge and her father had already had words on that memorable occasion, a year ago, when he had been forbidden ever to set foot near the Stone Fort again excepting in the performance of the Company's business.

Yet it was this same Daido Lavarge, who as a boy in the service of the Company, for one year when her father was home in Scotland, had been chore boy at the Fort and had been her faithful companion, protector, watch-dog and champion. It was this same Daido Lavarge, a gangling youth of eighteen, just five years ago, who had saved her life when her canoe upset in the flood-race going over the Saint Andrew's Rapids, when none dared that flood but Lavarge, dashing fearlessly into the torrent of water and floating ice, with every odds against him, shouting to her to hold fast, gathering her limp body to his as she was clinging despairingly to the upturned canoe, and swimming ashore with her, laughing and taunting the water to do its worst, and crooning to her between times to keep up her courage. For that he received the tearful thanks of a distraught father and mother.

Gratitude! Yes! But this was different. Daido Lavarge as the lover, the husband of a Factor's daughter—it was beyond the pale of even a thought of Margery's father.

Daido Lavarge!—open as a book to Margery; closer than a Red River fresh-water clam shell to others. Lavarge!—an enigma, but still the keeper of Margery's heart, for who, after all, who knew him as she knew him, could fail to love him? And in Margery's heart was that which, in defiance of social position, of family, church, anything, everything, would rise and follow Daido Lavarge wherever he might have a mind to go. But Lavarge had his own code to follow. His honour! In his great love of Margery—a love hardly as yet expressed after all—he had no thought save that he might be privileged to fight his way for her, work for her, rise in position for her—hopeless as it might seem for him ever to rise against the misfortune of his birth—but work and strive he would until the barriers of parental objections were swept away and he would be welcomed as a son. But of the coming of such a time he had long despaired.

#### THE FRACAS

WHILE Margery was assisting her mother in the kitchen with the Christmas fare, long after Factor Armstrong, fatigued and sleepy from his long journey, had retired to rest, her father came in from the men's quarters, where, between the new arrivals and the regular Fort servants, there had been first hilarity, then argument, later strong words and finally a quarrel.

Factor McAllister, red in the face and bitterly angry, expressed himself to the ladies in strong terms.

"For two pins I'd clap that fighting hell-cat Lavarge in irons."

Margery paled, but she kept at her work of mixing the dressing for the Christmas geese.

"Why, Andrew, what has he been doing?" asked Mrs. McAllister. "Whatever young Lavarge may be, he is not usually quarrelsome if left alone, and you never find him the worse for liquor."

"Every time he comes here, seldom as it is, thank goodness! he sets up the backs of some of my men. His standoffishness, his would-be superiority, his display of book-learning, his swagger and confidence, gets them somehow."

"And who has he been getting in wrong with this time?"

"He has nearly killed Kitto Murison."

"What, Andrew? Lavarge, a mere youth compared with that two hundred and fifty pounds of solid bone and muscle—why, if he has done that to Murison in a straight tussle, he deserves a medal. Murison is a drunken, brawling,

foul-mouthed bully, always spoiling for a fight with somebody half his weight and size."

Factor McAllister softened a little at his wife's description and evident partisanship, and he almost smiled as he remarked:

"Where would you expect him to find anybody to brawl with of his own weight and size, anyway?"

"What caused the trouble, Andrew?" she asked, interested, as she always was, to learn all about the sportive instincts and exploits of the men. Margery meantime continued her work, although in a flutter of pent-up excitement.

"Murison has been put into the hospital till he comes to.

"It seems that Lavarge had been sitting in a corner reading—what do you think of all things?—Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which he had in a Shakespeare volume he carries about with him always. Murison, of course, accused him of thinking he was better than the rest of them, quipped him about his book-learning, and finally tried to grab the book away from Lavarge. You can imagine that firebrand under such circumstances. There were words, and Murison told Lavarge not to forget that he was only a half-breed like the rest of them.

"'And that's a dirty half-breed's lie,' cried Lavarge—fool that he was, for everybody knows he is native.

"'You've got to show us,' retorted Murison.

"In a rush of anger, Lavarge jumped up and stripped himself to the waist before all of them, displaying his body to their gaze.

"'See that—and that, you slandering hounds,' he cried, turning himself about. Murison hardly knew what the word 'slandering' really meant.

"'What cur among you breeds has a chest and back as white as mine after twenty-three years in the forest?' he went on. 'I'm white—white—white, I tell you. And who among you has the courage to say I'm black, or red, or yellow like the rest of you?'

"He strode up to the towering Murison, 'Now say I'm native, you flabby, white-livered overgrown rabbit,' he cried.

Factor McAllister was warming to his story and almost seemed to live it over as he talked, forgetting his enmity against Lavarge in the telling of it.

"For language, I never heard the beat of Lavarge. He had everybody talked blind, and in the best of English. I got in during his last tirade on Murison. Well, Murison spat in the fireplace and growled back at Lavarge, not a bit cowed by his display of fireworks.

"'You white?' He laughed uproariously. 'Would you mind tellin' us who your father was?'

"Lavarge sprang at Murison. It was like the release of an explosion of dynamite. No one saw him actually strike Murison, he went at him so quickly.

There was one loud crash and Murison dropped senseless to the floor. I'm not denying it was as bonny a blow as man could give.

"Lavarge was as calm as a park pond when I went over to him. As he slowly put on his shirt and jacket, I got a good look at him, and in fairness I must confess his body is as white as my own. But that signifies nothing. He's a nondescript, just the same. I ordered him to his quarters, quick. His only answer was, 'I'm sorry, sir,' and he went off.

"Murison, as I said, is coming round in the hospital. I thought at first his jaw was broken. As it is, it will be little Christmas dinner he will masticate to-morrow.

"Ay—maybe it was coming to Murison, but Lavarge had better accept his position as it is, until he can prove differently, which will never be. If he doesn't, there will soon be no holding him in, and I can't have my men hurt in this way by him or any one else. As I said, for two pins, if it hadn't been Christmas Eve, I'd have let him cool his heels in irons in the prison house. I would know then where he was and safely out of mischief.

"But Sir George Simpson may come down here for a few minutes after the Christmas service to-morrow forenoon. He generally does that when he is wintering in the Red River. I didn't want to have any prison occupants and their rows to explain away to Sir George of all people."

#### A MIDNIGHT TRYST

WHEN all in the residence at the Fort was wrapped in stillness and in darkness, and the night was well spent, Margery McAllister rose cautiously, dressed herself quickly and stole from her bedroom, downstairs, in her moccasins, and out by the back door. Her feet had hardly touched the snow-covered ground, when she was joined by Daido. His eyes were sparkling with excitement.

"My dear, my dear! I knew you would come," he whispered.

The intense cold of forty-below-zero weather had evidently no effect on his wonderful constitution, although he must have been waiting out there for hours.

"Hush!" cautioned Margery.

They walked slowly toward the tiny gateway near the north-east bastion—the bastion that was used as the powder magazine for the Fort—alongside the wooden stockade that encompassed part of the outer garden beyond the stone wall. Margery opened the gate with a key she carried, and they followed the old trail along the bank of the Red River, by the clumps of silver willows and through the thicker bush beyond.



*South-West Bastion, with Old Cannon from the Upper Fort*

"I am sorry I was so long in coming, Daido," said Margery. "I thought they would never, never settle down to sleep. You must be perishing with cold in the waiting."

Lavarge laughed.

"You know, it is dreadfully wrong my coming in this way," she continued. "It would be awful if anybody ever found out."

"Yes, Margery, and I should not have asked you to take the risk. My selfishness makes me forget your danger. If you are missed it will cause you endless trouble and worry. It would end everything for ever."

"Ah, Daido!—it would make no difference that way at all, for you know father has ended everything long ago so far as his way goes—and, oh, dear, I fear me it goes a very long way. I dare not—I must not disobey my dear father. But he has been so severe in this."

Her mood changed a little and rebellion came into her eyes.

"Still, I wanted to come to-night—Christmas Eve, or rather Christmas morning. I wanted just this once to talk with you again. It is a whole year since I have seen you. You know father won't let us be a moment together if he knows of it, so what was I to do? He will be having you on your way north again just as soon as this precious day is over. Daido, tell me all that has been happening to you; tell me what you have been doing. Tell me what you mean

to do, for I know you are going to progress; that you will never, never give in. You will, Daido, you must succeed."

He put his arm about her and he trembled in the greatness of his joy at her nearness. The softness of her body, the charm of her presence, the perfume of freshness and dainty femininity almost made his senses swoon. Together they walked slowly down the trail, while he told her of his adventures during the year that had gone—ordinary and familiar doings for a man of the open, and usual to the ear of a Factor's daughter, but new and different in the light of their being the doings of Daido Lavarge told in the ear of Margery McAllister. Time was short, ever so fleeting, and Margery dreaded every moment the discovery of her departure from the residence.

"Daido," she asked, "why did you quarrel with Kitto Murison last night, of all nights?"

He started to tell her, but she stayed him.

"Never mind—I know already. Father told us, and he was very angry with you."

Lavarge stood still.

#### LAVARGE'S STRANGE HISTORY

"**M**ARGERY, surely you, too, do not doubt that I am a white man? You do not think that I would dare to tell you of my great love for you, dear, if I were not convinced absolutely of my white parentage, convinced that there is not a drop of Indian blood in my veins, that my mother and father were white people—no matter what others may think about it? It is true I was brought up an Indian, in the wigwam of Chief Black Eagle of the Sioux, that I ran naked with Indian children and learned their ways, their customs, their mode of life, living their life of savagery, but always, Margery, I have been different. When a chance word from my foster-mother, during my twelfth year, betrayed to me that I was not really her child, I brooded a whole year, then, convinced that what she said was true, I ran off and attached myself to white people who were travelling on the prairie, and among white people and natives I have chosen to live ever since.

"Margery, I have been an outcast; not as one of the half-breeds, because I am different from them; ostracized more or less by the whites because they hold I am half-breed. Foolishly, I thought I would be able to live this down by educating myself. I did so, in order to prove my birthright by my ability to master anything a white man could master. But no—it required more than that, and I had nothing more than that to show—at least not then.

"Margery—you believe me? I shall never ask you to leave all your loved ones for me. Daido Lavarge is not that kind of lover. I shall never love again. You and I may never meet again, but, dear—tell me this—you—you of all people—you believe me white?"

Margery put her head against his breast, where his throbbing heart seemed to be pounding down its barriers of flesh and blood and bone.

"Dear, dear Daido! I have always believed that of you—always, always. Oh, can't we—can't you prove it to others? It should not really be so hard a thing to do, even if we were to find your foster-mother among the Sioux and have her prove it, showing her that it would be for your good."

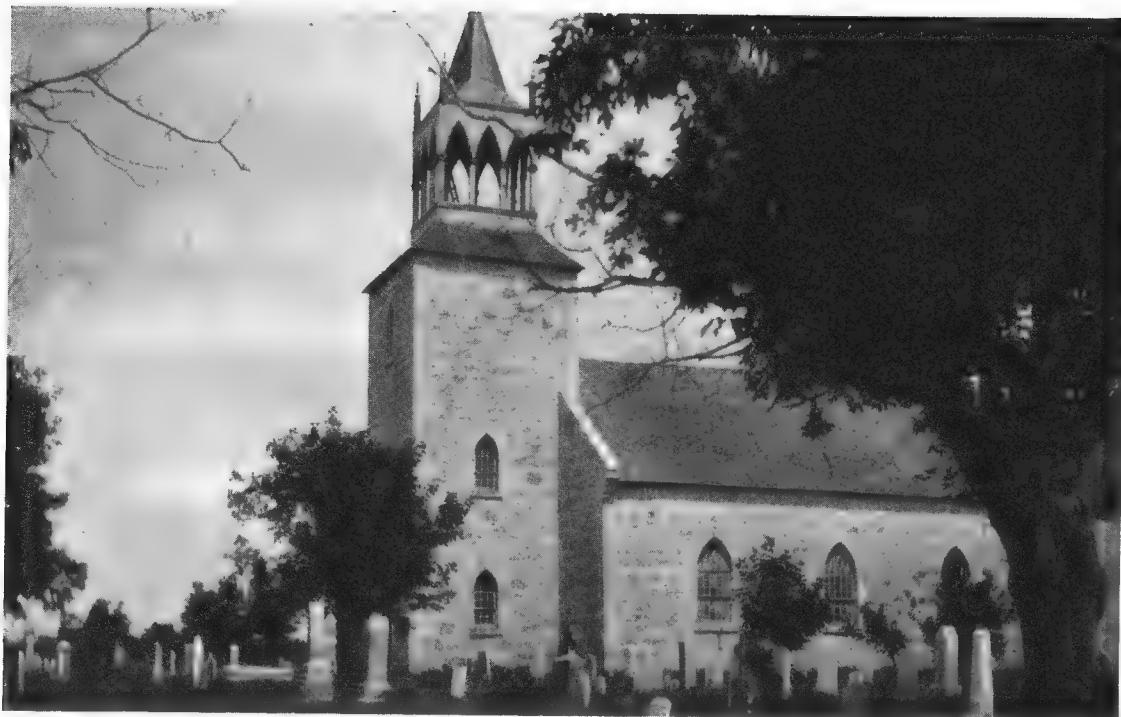
"Useless, Margery, she would never dare to divulge what she knows. As it is, she has doubtless suffered terribly for telling me in a weak moment what she did."

They stood together in silence for a time, then Daido and she turned back toward the Fort, for the cold grey of dawn was coming up away across the river.

"There is one thing, Margery," Daido whispered, when they were once more near the residence. "Take this, for to-night only. Look at it when you get back to your bedroom, when you are entirely alone. My foster-mother, White Fawn, had this in her possession. I remember it all the early days of my life. She told me it was about my neck when I came to her originally, although just how I came to her she would never say. The chain to which it was attached has long been broken and lost, but she kept this. White Fawn has loved me and thought of me all the years I have been away. She heard in some way that I was Daido Lavarge who served the Great Company. She sent a message to me last year, after I left you, that if I came to her and would see her secretly she would give me this gift. I went, for I was eager, apart from this, to see her again who had been so kind to me. Our meeting was short and she bade me a long, long farewell. We shall never meet again. It is a miniature, well preserved—a white lady and her baby. I am sure that baby is myself—the lady my own mother.

"I have looked among white ladies for this mother of mine, but have failed so far to find her. I have looked at the pictures in every white home I am permitted to enter, searching for that sweet face, but I have looked in vain. Friendless, I could not confide this to any one during the past year. I have kept it to myself in the satisfaction that when things go against me, when I feel that I am suffering too greatly for this misfortune of my birth, the truth of it all is there.

"Anger caused me to bare my body to those hounds in the men's quarters last night, but respect for the dear lady in that picture prevented me displaying it to their vulgar gaze. They would only have laughed at me, anyway, and called me a madman, perhaps a thief. And I could not risk ever losing my precious trinket. But you, Margery, dearest, you should know everything. I wish



*Saint Andrew's Church, built by Duncan McRae, who built Lower Fort Garry*

you to take it for to-night. To-morrow night, perhaps, at the servants' dance in the men's house—for the residence folks always come over for an hour or so—perhaps you will find an opportunity to return it to me, because the morning following I am sure to be on the winter trail for York Factory."

"Daido," she asked, "tell me how you got named."

"Why—the name Lavarge I purloined from a French-Canadian trader who once befriended me, and I liked the sound of it. The name Daido was given me by my foster-mother, White Fawn. She said that when she got me first, I always referred to myself as Daido—so I have kept it ever since as my only real personal possession. Sometimes I have wondered if it was not a baby's lisping for the name David, but it might be Donald or Douglas or even Daniel."

With a sigh, Lavarge turned to leave Margery. She laid a detaining hand on his arm and held up her tear-stained face to his, and for the first time in his life Daido Lavarge's lips touched those of a woman, and the touch thrilled the very soul of him, so that in his great transport and fear for himself, he ran from the presence of her he loved so dearly.

In the quiet of her bedroom, which she reached without awaking any of the occupants of the house, just as the red dawn was coming up, Margery examined

the miniature which Daido had placed in her hand. It was a beautiful picture, evidently the work of a real artist; a beautiful young mother, dressed as a lady of her time would be, with a bright-eyed, chubby baby held against her cheek. There was a look in the lady's face that Margery seemed to have seen before—but it would not connect with her present-day reality. It was a vague throw-back of memory, or perhaps just the resemblance it bore to Daido. After all, this was just one of thousands of cultured British madonnas. But if this child were really Daido, and the lady his mother, any lingering doubt of his white birth must be for ever banished. And she lay wondering how she could aid him in establishing the truth of it.

#### THE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

A MERRY tolling of the bell at the Fort announced Christmas morning. The members of the Lower Fort Garry household attended the special service in the stone church by the riverside a mile or so to the south of the Fort. There, in seats reserved in front, sat the commissioned officers of the Company and their wives and families, dressed in their best Sunday winter raiment. Beside them were the officers of the soldiery then stationed at the Fort and immediately behind them again the soldiers and non-commissioned officers.

Farther back, devoutly quiet and respectful, sat the servants, and still farther back the natives and a smattering of full-blooded Cree converts. Among the servants sat Daido Lavarge, steel-eyed and fearless, heeding none, hearing nothing but the music from the little organ played by Margery McAllister and the sound of her sweet voice leading in the singing. With the singing, his eyes softened and took on smouldering fire. He listened then to the words of the preacher and quickly became enthralled and strangely filled with reverence at the simply-told story of the Nativity. When the little choir rose and sang, perhaps for the first time in divine service in the Red River Valley, Charles Wesley's great Christmas hymn, set to the music composed by Mendelssohn, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," Daido Lavarge's soul soared to heights he had never before dreamed of.

Throughout the entire service he was able to feast his eyes on his beloved Margery to the content of his heart, and none could deny him the joy of it. But although she knew of his presence, Margery dared not return his look by so much as a stolen glance from where she sat. When the service was over, Christmas greetings were passed among friends, then in their waiting cutters, smothered in robes, a merry jingling party returned to the Fort, to entertain the children of the servants to their great Christmas tree in the men's house.

## MARGERY GREETS THE GOVERNOR

HARDLY was that pleasure over, when the cutter of Sir George Simpson swung down the driveway. As if by magic, the governor's flag, with the Company's coat-of-arms and the symbolic words, "Pro Pelle Cutem," ran up to the top of the flagpole, while every member of the staff turned out to greet this great man, already assured of a place in the history of the country, the man whose word ruled half a continent and whose energy, foresight and wisdom had safeguarded that same half-continent for the British Empire.

Sir George looked slightly fatigued that morning, a little careworn, but kindness and humour, too, looked out from his worldly-wise eyes. He cordially greeted his Factors, McAllister and Armstrong, and quickly turned from them to the ladies, with that gallantry and courtliness for which he was famed.

"Charming as a June rose, my dear Margery," he said to her, as she curtsied before him and wished him A Merry Christmas. At that moment a great inspiration seized Margery McAllister.

"May I claim a favour for Christmas morning, Sir George?" she asked sweetly but timidly. "I know how busy you are, but could you spare for me just five minutes of your time, alone, before you return to the Upper Fort?"

He looked at her sharply, but at the innocent beauty in her fresh young face he softened.

"Why yes, indeed, Margery. The Governor of Rupert's Land would be a churl indeed, if he did not always have a moment to spare for one whom he has watched grow from the tiniest of rose-buds. But I leave for the Upper Fort in forty minutes. My business with your father will take exactly twenty-five. Come to me in the office in half an hour, to the second."

## SIR GEORGE CONSIDERS A CHRISTMAS FAVOUR

IN precisely twenty-five minutes, Margery heard her father come out from the presence of Sir George and, five minutes later she ventured timidly into the office. He greeted her kindly and rose to place a chair for her. By his hand were documents, neatly folded and secured by pink binding tapes.

"Tell me now, Margery, how I can be of service to you," he asked.

"The service is not for myself, Sir George, nor at the request of any other, but I would speak of my own volition for one keen in your service, devoted to the Company, anxious to be given the chance to rise."

His brows knitted. Like many great men, he had little patience with petticoat lobbying, especially in matters relating to his business.

"And that is—?" he asked.

"Daido Lavarge," she said slowly.

"Lavarge! Let me recollect a moment." Then he began to intone, "In the service seven years, since he was sixteen; a strong, determined and diligent young man; hard to equal for travel on the Winter Road; a first-class voyageur; shrewd, sober; a temper that would do with better control and may improve with the mellowing of years; a reader—an estimable quality in any young person—keen to educate himself; altogether a splendid native of Sioux extraction—a young man with no known antecedents."

Sir George ran along as if he had been reading from some docket on Daido Lavarge that he had just taken from a pigeon-hole in his desk. His minute knowledge of his business affairs, his marvellous memory for details, his evident acquaintance with the character of every man in the service, frightened Margery, but her fighting spirit was keen and she was fighting for her lover.

"A very accurate and fair description, Sir George," she put in, "but wrong on the last two counts."

"What? You dare say that! Young lady, you seem to be mightily interested in this fellow, Lavarge. And you claim to be better informed on his history than myself. Perhaps you will set me right, quickly."

He tugged at his heavy gold seal and laid his watch on the table at his hand.

"Daido Lavarge is not of Sioux blood. His antecedents are purely British."

"And your proof of this somewhat bold assertion?" he asked, narrowing his eyes in thought.

"When a baby, he was stolen from his parents in a Sioux raid. This miniature was about his neck." Margery handed the trinket to Sir George. "Daido Lavarge is certain that it is of his mother and himself."

Sir George scrutinized the miniature with growing interest. At last he looked over at Margery.

"Why, my dear, this is the picture— This is incredible—unbelievable. You might leave it with me to investigate further."

"But I dare not do so, Sir George," she answered anxiously. "Daido Lavarge leaves for York Factory to-morrow morning. I have promised to return this to him to-night."

"Lavarge does *not* leave for York to-morrow," he replied. "But, I shall have this back in your hands some time to-night, Margery. Now, young lady, your personal interest in this Lavarge?"

Margery cast her eyes to the floor, as a faint blush mantled her already rosy cheeks.

"My interest, Sir George, is only for his welfare. I believe him to be a worthy young man."

"Yes—I begin to understand. And what has your father to say to all this?" he asked, getting quickly to the roots of the matter.

"My father has forbidden Lavarge the Fort except in the execution of Company's business. My father has forbidden me to speak to Lavarge, has forbidden him to address me on any matter whatever."

"Uhm!" said the Governor, rising as a signal that the interview was at its close.

"But—but, Sir George," put in Margery, rising also, with a great fear in her heart that her mission had been in vain. "You *will* help him to progress in the service?"

His eyes twinkled. "The eternal feminine bubbles up even in one so young; you come right back to the point at issue. Well, we'll see, Margery, lass—we'll see. And meantime, laugh and be happy, my dear. It is Christmas Day, and that sweet face of yours was made for smiles always, tears never."

As he opened the door to let her pass through, he sang softly to himself, but so that she could hear,

"Though faither and mither and a' should gae mad  
Just whistle and I'll come tae ye, my lad."

Two minutes later his cutter was gliding quickly in the direction of Upper Fort Garry.

#### CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE STONE FORT

CHRISTMAS dinner with the McAllisters at the Stone Fort! To have partaken of that was to have experienced the lavish hospitality of the Great Company itself; with the residence decorated with holly and other evergreens, with red and white berries, and the Company's flag, the red ensign, decorating the wall behind the Factor's stout armchair; a long table covered with spotless linen reserved specially for this great annual event, and decorated with bright silver; freshly moulded candles throwing a brilliance from spreading candelabra, over huge platters of roast goose, venison, buffalo hump, mouffle, whitefish from Lake Winnipeg browned in buffalo marrow, buffalo tongues, plum pudding that would soon be drenched in brandy and set on fire to bring out the flavour under the spell of the spirit's tiny blue flames; cakes and whatever imported fruit could be brought into the country. And seated around the groaning table, with happy faces and merry tongues, the ladies in silk and

satin crinolines, the gentlemen in their surtouts, their dress coats and tight breeches, and soldiers in their bright-coloured mess uniforms.

Early that afternoon the happy gathering sat down to dinner in the great dining hall of the McAllisters, the Factor at the head of the table and his good lady at the opposite end. Factor Armstrong, the younger Company officers and apprentices, Margery and several of her young lady friends of the choir whom she had brought with her from church service, as well as the garrison officers.

Outside, the weather was forty below zero; in the residence it was warm and comfortable as a day in July. The great log fire at the far end crackled and roared as the servants plied it with spruce, birch and tamarack. Charming were the young ladies, gay and gallant were the gentlemen, and no word of discord marred the merry party. Toasts were proposed and responded: "The Queen," "The Company," "Our Hosts," "Our Guests," "The Church"—with sincerity and a right good will.

Not until the evening began to close in did they rise from that lavish table, to continue with a happy hour of music, song and story, in which Margery and her young lady friends of the choir, and the apprentices and garrison officers all joined heartily. Even Factor Armstrong regaled them with his only song, which related, in endless verses and little variety in tune, the proceedings of an Irish party. Interspersed was the occasional dance—a slow, dreamy waltz, a merry set of quadrilles and the still more robust Highland schottische and Highland reel.

A messenger arrived from the Upper Fort with a despatch for Factor McAllister, also with a private envelope for Margery bearing on the outside the impression in sealing-wax of the private seal of Sir George. In this envelope was the miniature, which fulfilled the Governor's promise of its return that evening.

Margery's father read his despatch from Sir George, called his friend Armstrong to his side by the mantel at the fireplace, and handed him the document to read also. The one looked at the other in perplexity for a moment. Sitting near them on a couch, Margery caught their conversation and it set her heart throbbing in excitement.

"And what do you make of that?" asked her father.

Factor Armstrong seemed not altogether displeased.

"Well—I have told you already, Andrew—he is a lad o' parts. It was a happening not to be altogether unlooked for."

McAllister's brows clouded.

"But his birth, man; his family? He has no background."

"The Governor's letter explains," put in Armstrong. He read part of it over slowly, "'Men born in the country, of Indian mothers, have served time and again as officers of the Company to their own great credit and to the honour



*Saleshop and Fur Loft, Lower Fort Garry*

of the Company. It has never been a positive detriment to a really good man. The day may come when it may be, but not in this day or generation. And it shall never be said that ability and loyalty in the service shall be allowed to go unrewarded if I can prevent it.

"I look to you and your fellow officers to support my proposal to place young Lavarge on the same scale as an apprentice who has finished his fifth year of service, with the charge of a post.

"Meantime, I wish Lavarge to remain here. Tell him to see me to-morrow forenoon at eleven, at the Upper Fort."

"Then mark this, Andrew, 'I have reason to doubt gravely young Lavarge's alleged Indian birth.'"

"Well," said McAllister, "this means a commission ultimately for him, if he makes good."

"Yes—and I believe the young man will prove a worthy officer, some day. Now he is a voyageur, a runner, a servant, yet he is not of that crowd. Neither is he accepted by any of us. He is between two stools—an outrageous and impossible position to keep any man in."

Factor McAllister was far from satisfied. He realized only too well that this would make his task of keeping Margery and Lavarge apart a thousand times more difficult, and while such men as Lavarge might serve the Company honourably and well, to be a son-in-law of his, the husband of his only daughter, the father, perhaps, of his daughter's children—that was another story, a condition altogether undesirable, utterly unthinkable. The despatch was pocketed, and the men joined once more in the fun and frolic around them.

#### MERRymaking in the Men's House

LIGHTS were showing in every house within the Fort's walls. The men's house was aglow. Bagpipe and violin music, robust laughter, shouting and the clapping of hands in time, told their story of a hilarious Christmas dance. Looking through the window from the hall of the residence, shadowy figures could be seen coming and going in an almost constant stream.

"We are about due to pay our time-honoured visit to the servants' party," cried out Factor McAllister at last. "Throw on your coats and wraps, good people, and let us show ourselves among the servants for an hour or so."

They all streamed over. The merriment among the servants, white and native, subsided on their entry, but hand-shaking and cheery words soon loosened tied tongues and feet, as officers and servants mingled together in the old-time dances.

Colin McLeod, the veteran piper, was on a table in a corner, dressed in kilt and marching up and down the modest six feet of its length, threatening every minute to fall off among the dancers of a reel, his pipes skirling and droning, untiring measure and rhythm in his music, although Colin had been at it for hours and had a piper's thirst. Stoves, almost red-hot, were going full blast; candles were bending over in their candlesticks which were fixed on wooden sconces on the walls. The servant women and native girls were dressed in coloured prints and muslins, bedecked with sashes, ribbons and tartan shawls, as they danced in silk-worked and brightly-beaded moccasins. Gaudy-coloured neckcloths and handkerchiefs were the special adornment of the men.

When Colin at last stopped piping to wet his thrapple, Murdo McIntyre, like a giant refreshed, took the top of the table with his fiddle. The foursome and eightsome reels were followed by the Red River Jig, the Duck Dance, the Rabbit Dance, Drops o' Brandy. The perspiring dancers seemed never to tire, and continually refreshed themselves in a side room with gallons of steaming black tea, which made them perspire all the more. The women were shy and

awkward in their movements, especially before the Fort ladies, but they could shuffle well to the rhythm of the dance. The men were all wildly hilarious and vied with one another in the multiplicity and intricacy of their steps, eliciting the admiration and applause of their fellows for any particularly fine or prolonged piece of footwork.

It was nearing midnight, the time when an unlimited supper of venison, buffalo meat, wild geese, stewed rabbits, cakes, bread and bears' grease, with plum pudding and again gallons of steaming black tea, would be set out for all in the decorated mess-room adjoining, with perhaps another ration of rum for the men. All were happy and well-behaved.

Margery danced but little, but her radiant loveliness filled the place like sweet music. Deference was shown her on every side. The native women were proud of even a word from her in passing, or a nod of recognition.

#### THE LOVE OF A MAN AND A MAID

IN there, too, was Daido Lavarge—in it, but not of it—standing by the fireplace surveying the varied scene, with interest and even a mild enjoyment showing in his face. No gaudy handkerchief or *l'assomption* belt and tassels adorned his strong, athletic form now, as might have been expected. And perhaps he looked bigger and stronger without these savage adornments. He was dressed in a white shirt, open at the neck, with dark, close-fitting trousers, belted at the waist. Leather walking shoes of European make were on his feet. His wavy hair, though unruly, had a nattiness in its very waywardness. An undecorated mooseskin coat was hanging over his left arm as if he had just recently dropped in, with no intention of remaining for any length of time.

He noticed Margery the moment she entered the room. His hungry eyes followed her everywhere as she danced, as she chatted, and particularly as she sang "Annie Laurie" for the gathering, to the soft accompaniment of Murdo McIntyre's violin, for Murdo was one of the greatest of the many great fiddlers in the Red River Valley, be it at dance music or accompanying a love song.

While passing him in a dance, Margery brushed close by, smiled sweetly to him and with a slight movement of her head signalled him to make toward the door.

Slowly he threaded his way along the wall and slipped outside. When the next dance, a quadrille, started up, and she saw her father rise to take part in it, Margery left the men's house by the dining-room and went out by the back entrance.

Daido joined her at once. His voice was tense with emotion. "Margery, my darling Margery;—you are radiant, beautiful. Oh, God, what am I to do? I must get away from here quickly or I shall die, or go mad. I cannot bear to think that any other should ever win you; that others should be permitted to speak to you, to dance with you, while I am forbidden.

"God's curse on the father who made me the child of an Indian mother," he cried suddenly.

Margery placed her hand soothingly on his arm as they walked together out by the driveway and around the Fort wall.

"Daido—how dare you say that, when you know so well that you are not the son of an Indian woman. You suffer continually because others will not believe what you know to be true. If you say this thing, even in anger, how can you expect others to refrain from saying it, or to fail to believe the lie to be true? You know your mother was a white lady. Take back that curse and never let it pass your lips again. Oh, Daido, for shame, for shame! Your father, I am as certain, was a splendid gentleman."

Crestfallen, Daido walked on in silence, then he turned to Margery.

"My dear, please, please forgive me. I am not myself. I know I was wrong to speak so. I am so sorry for it now. It shall never, never happen again.

"But—oh, Margery, who will believe I am what I am?"

"The Governor does, Daido."

Wide-eyed, Lavarge stared at Margery as if she had gone suddenly mad. His searching eyes seemed to burn into her very soul.

"The Governor!" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes! Oh, Daido—I spoke to him this morning, for you. I asked him to give you a real chance to prove your worth, not as a servant, but as an officer of the Company. He thinks well of you, Daido. He said so. He listened attentively to the little I told him about you. I showed him your miniature. He took it away with him and returned it to me this evening by special messenger. See—here it is. I wanted you to have it again in your own safe keeping. That is why I beckoned to you to come outside."

Lavarge took the picture from her hand slowly and dumbly. He held it up to his lips, kissed it reverently and murmured, "God give me courage and patience." He gazed at it again. "My dear, dear mother—your lad needs your help. He is at the breaking point. Help him, dear mother, not to break now. Mother! Mother!"

Tears flooded the eyes of this great strong man of the forest, who had never been known to shed a tear before, to whom tears were but a woman's frailty and unworthy of a man. And as if ashamed of his weakness, Daido brushed them away quickly.

## THE GOVERNOR TAKES A HAND

MARGERY and he continued their walk.

"Margery, dear," his voice was all softness and caress, "does Sir George believe this?"

"He did not say so in so many words, Daido, but I really think he does. Perhaps, who knows, he may be trying now to trace your people, for why should he have insisted on taking the miniature with him early this afternoon?

"And, Daido, oh, Daido—what news, oh, what news!" She brightened and sparkled at the thought of it, having almost forgotten it on account of Daido's peculiar mood. "First, Daido, you must know I do love you sincerely and just for yourself. No matter what happens, where you may be, what others may think or say of you, I will always love you."

He drew her to him tenderly.

"Yes, dear, I know. And no matter what happens, where I may be, what others may think or say of me, I shall never forget what you have told me and I shall never cease to thank God for this half-hour."

"Daido—the Governor sent a despatch to father. I heard Factor Armstrong and him discuss it. I heard Mr. Armstrong read parts of it. It concerned you. Yes, you, Daido! Think of it—the Governor writing a special despatch about you. How proud you should be."

"If it does not betray any Company secret—tell me about this, Margery," he replied, in a fever of agitation. "They are not—not dismissing me from the service I love, because of yesterday's fracas with Kitto Murison?"

"Bless you, no!" She smiled and went on with tantalizing slowness, "Daido Lavarge—an estimable young voyageur in the Company's service is to be given the rating of an apprentice with five years' completed service, to be given charge of a post and to be placed in line for usual promotion—all recommended by Sir George Simpson, Governor of Rupert's Land."

"Margery—you have surely gone mad! Please—please don't make fun of me so. I—"

"But it is true—true, Daido. Oh—and I am so proud of you."

His emotion was too great for further words, for he knew that if this wonderful thing were true, if Sir George Simpson had recommended his promotion in the service, it was as good as an accomplished fact.

"His letter to father said he wished to have an interview with you to-morrow."

## THE FACTOR'S ANGER

MARGERY and Daido Lavarge were now standing together by the northern bastion. Neither had spoken for some time. Daido's strong arm was about Margery's waist, and her face was raised to his. As he bent to kiss her, there was a sound near by of heavy feet scrunching the frozen snow. The angry voice of Margery's father cut the air and shattered their dreams and their newborn happiness.

"Stop—you mongrel," he blazed, springing in and tearing Margery from her lover's arms. "You—you—"

Factor McAllister's left arm shot out and struck Daido on the jaw. He was a big and very powerful man and his blow was such as would have felled a buffalo calf. As it was, Lavarge staggered against the wall of the bastion.

Margery rushed in between, screaming, "Father, father, father!"

McAllister pushed her back almost roughly. "Get to the house! Do you hear me! To the house at once! You—you little fool!"

Crushed by his words, dumbfounded by the viciousness of her father's onslaught and always used to obeying his commands, she turned with a cry and ran into the Fort.

"Lavarge—I warned you not to speak to or to come near my daughter. A gentleman would have obeyed that warning instead of continuing to thrust his attentions on one who is a mere child in such matters and all unused to the ways of such as you. You have openly flouted my orders, but I will have you know that I am a senior officer in the service, I am in charge of this Fort, I am master in my own household."

He struck Lavarge across the cheek with his open hand.

"We are man to man—not officer and servant. If you are not the coward I think you are, put up your hands and defend yourself."

Daido Lavarge stood stock still, his hands by his sides.

"Bah!" cried McAllister, beside himself in anger, "take that, then, for good measure."

He struck the young voyageur on his other cheek, then turned on his heel. At the western gateway he stopped and returned slowly toward Lavarge, who was still standing mute, as if in a daze.

"I have a message for you, Lavarge, from Sir George Simpson. My duty alone compels me to impart it to you. Follow me to the residence and receive your orders, then, if I ever find you within the walls of the Stone Fort, I promise you only one of us shall leave it alive."

He turned from Lavarge once more. The latter followed him mechanically, his face icy cold, with the livid weals standing out where the Factor had struck

him. His eyes were steely and inscrutable. At the entrance to the residence, Margery, unstrung and weeping, and Factor Armstrong, solemn-visaged and seemingly much perturbed, came hurrying out.

"Get back to the house, Margery. David, you might please come also. I have a word to say to this fellow in the presence of both of you."

#### THE OUTCAST FINDS A FATHER

THEY re-entered the house, and as Lavarge crossed the threshold, neither anger, disdain nor bravado showed in his face, but rather a martyrlike look of pity. Factor McAllister spoke to him at once.

"Lavarge, the Governor in a letter to me to-day states: 'I wish Lavarge to remain here. Tell him to see me to-morrow forenoon at eleven, at the Upper Fort.' That is all, Lavarge, excepting one thing; it is not my intention to permit my daughter to wed any but her own kind. You do not belong to our kind. Get out, you son of a Sioux squaw, and never let your face darken my door again."

Margery ran forward, confronting her father boldly. "Father—that is untrue, unmanly. It is a lie, I tell you it is a lie. Daido Lavarge is as white as you are—as I am."

Factor McAllister stiffened, speechless at this, his daughter's first verbal rebuttal of anything he had ever said. But he pulled himself together with an effort.

"So he has whined his fairy-tale to you. That is like the cowardly thing he would do."

"Oh, Daido, Daido," she pleaded in tears, "please, please show father your mother's picture."

"Margery, little good that would do him or me now. If he weren't your father, he'd be lying dead by the outer bastion. But—he is your father and I respect the man who fathered such as you."

He swung about to depart, but Margery clung to him.

"Yes, Daido, yes! You must—I demand it as my right now. Show it to him. It can do no hurt. Please, please—for me, for my sake, for our love, Daido," she cried recklessly.

Slowly Lavarge took the tiny, golden-bound picture from an inner pocket in his shirt, over his heart, and placing it in her hands, stood disinterestedly by.

"See—father—see! That was around his neck when he was stolen by the Sioux."

"I have no desire to see it," replied McAllister, ignoring the proffered trinket.  
"I can stand no more of this fellow's subterfuge."

Factor David Armstrong meantime had been standing a silent witness, not caring to interfere in a matter so close to the heart and home of his old friend. Margery went over to him, sobbing in her distress. "You will look at this, Mr. Armstrong. It is Daido's mother, and himself as a baby. He—this—do please say that you are sure the lady is a white lady."

Armstrong cast a hurried glance at the picture. Then he looked again. With widening eyes he seized it from Margery's hand. He gazed at it as if he would devour it. The blood fled from his face and his hands trembled. He staggered against the mantelshelf. His lips became pale and tight-drawn, shrinking to a thin line.

He looked over to Lavarge, like a man who had seen an apparition.

"Great God!" came the words from his dry lips at last. "Great God!"

He crossed the floor unsteadily, pushing back McAllister's hand as it went out to assist him. He put his own hand on Daido's arm. He turned the young man about and searched his face keenly.

"Daido Lavarge—as you believe in a God, in a hereafter, I command you to answer me truthfully. How did this picture come into your possession?"

"I was stolen, sir, by the Sioux, when a child. This was about my neck, with a gold chain. The chain has long been broken and lost. My foster-mother, White Fawn, wife of Chief Black Eagle, told me so. I ran away when a boy. I got this miniature from White Fawn hardly a year ago, when I visited her secretly."

"Daido Lavarge! Daido Lavarge!" repeated Armstrong brokenly. "That is not your name. You—your name is—David Armstrong!"

"See—Andrew—my wife, my boy, Davey!"

Factor McAllister took the miniature from Armstrong's trembling fingers.

"Yes—yes!" he whispered hoarsely. "It is—Margery—David. And I—Oh, God in Heaven, forgive me!"

But David Armstrong hardly heard him. Daido Lavarge heard him not at all. Only Margery gathered the full significance of what her father was saying; what it meant to him to say it; what it meant to her, to Daido.

The big arms of Lavarge were about the sturdy body of old Factor Armstrong, whose face was hidden in the young voyageur's breast, and tears were streaming down the cheeks of strong men in the residence of the Stone Fort.

"David—David—wee Davey—my son!" cried Armstrong brokenly. "Oh, my son! My laddie! My laddie!"

Voices outside, in song and laughter, floated through the crisp air and penetrated the residence. Margery's choir friends were gathered out there on the driveway, tucked comfortably in their buffalo robes in their sleighs, ready to

start for their homes, bidding good-bye to Mrs. McAllister, who had remained with them till the end of the entertainment in the men's house. As the door of the residence opened and the happy occupants streamed onto the veranda, the chatter was stilled as if by preconcerted signal. All was suddenly quiet, then out of the quiet rose sweet voices, blending with the harmony that prevailed everywhere within the walls of the Stone Fort:

"Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
Glory to the new-born King."

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